

ARKANSAS HISTORY COMMISSION

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MASONIC RECORDS IN ARKANSAS

The Masonic Lodge has long held a popular and venerated position in the hearts and minds of the people of Arkansas. From the earliest days, most rural communities did not feel "civilized" until they could boast of a church or two, a schoolhouse, and a Masonic Lodge. Since the founding of Lodge #1 in Fayetteville in 1836, the number of local organizations has grown to almost 800. The most useful records of this organization are the records of the charters of local chapters or lodges. These show the location of the lodge, its date of origination, and the names of its charter members. Unfortunately for Arkansas researchers, many of these charter records were destroyed when the Grand Lodge headquarters in Little Rock burned in 1919. However, the printed annual proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Arkansas survived and have recently been microfilmed by the History Commission. These records contain a wealth of information on individual lodges and individual lodge members. Perhaps the most important to genealogists are the yearly obituary reports containing information concerning member's deaths. These reports give the name of the deceased, his date of death, and name of his local lodge. However, the individual proceeding reports are not indexed. *The Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Arkansas from 1841, 1865-1938*, are available in the General Microfilm File under "Masons."

There are also two recently published compilations of Arkansas Masonic death records:

Masonic Deaths in Arkansas 1838-1916, by Arlene LaGrone, published by the Arkansas Genealogical Society.

Masonic Death Records from the Grand Lodge of Arkansas 1941-1990, by Desmond W. Allen, published by Arkansas Research.

*Masonic death records from 1917-1938 have not yet been abstracted and indexed. However, they are listed in the yearly reports.